

when his patrol car skidded off the Ventura Freeway.

Words cannot express the sense of sadness we have for his family. David Rodriguez was a model first responder, whose bravery in death merits our admiration and respect.

#### PERSONAL EXPLANATION

### HON. WAYNE T. GILCHREST

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, August 1, 2007*

Mr. GILCHREST. Madam Speaker, please let the record show that had I been present for rollcall vote No. 763, I would have voted "aye."

#### CELEBRATING THE NEW YORK LATINO FILM FESTIVAL

### HON. CHARLES B. RANGEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, August 1, 2007*

Mr. RANGEL. Madam Speaker, today I rise to congratulate one of my constituents, Calixto Chinchilla, on the completion of what has quickly become a New York film tradition: the New York International Latino Film Festival.

This past Sunday, Chinchilla and a group of dedicated volunteers and sponsors closed out another fantastic 5 days of film screenings and panels for the eighth straight year. Chinchilla, then a young marketing executive, founded the festival in 1999 to showcase the talent of the growing Hispanic community, at home and abroad.

It's crazy to think that despite's New York's immense Latino talent, there has never been a consistent side-by-side display of Spanish-language and English language films from all of Latin America and the U.S. But there wasn't. So he pulled together an event that looked to shatter stereotypes that society had about Latinos with films that came from all over the Hispanic Diaspora and that challenged notions that both mainstream society and the Latino community had when it came to race, ethnicity and class. He sought to do this in an environment where Hollywood could meet independent cinema, so that fresh faces could be brought to the stage and longtime community voices could be heard.

The journey has not been perfect, yet Chinchilla, current co-Executive Director Elizabeth Gardner and enthusiastic mix of veterans and newbie volunteers always seem to pull it off bigger and better each time around. Although many of the films are shown downtown, Chinchilla has made a habit of bringing the festival to other parts of the city during and after the summer festival. The only local festival to feature a night exclusively dedicated to Dominicans, NYILFF this year will also treat my constituents in Washington Heights with a family day filled with games, activities and movies for children.

I submit into the record two articles from the New York Daily News that provide a little more information about this year's showcase. It's just another example of the great body of artistic talent that has called and will continue to call Northern Manhattan home.

[From the New York Daily News, July 25, 2007]

#### PICTURES OF LATINO LIFE

(By Roberto Dominguez)

It took a few years for aspiring director Bruno Irizarry to get around to making a movie about the trouble many Latino actors have finding quality, nonstereotypical roles.

But Irizarry didn't hesitate when it came to submitting his feature-length film, "Shut Up and Do It!," to the one festival he knew would appreciate it.

The comedy is among the 80 or so features, shorts and documentaries at the New York International Latino Film Festival, now in its eighth year of showcasing new movies by or about Hispanics.

The festival was founded in 1999 by Calixto Chinchilla, at the time a Warner Bros. marketing employee, who felt the need to counteract the dearth of Latino themes and characters in mainstream movies.

"Shut Up and Do It!" is about a down-on-his-luck Latino actor compelled to make his own movie—and cast himself in it—because of a lack of good parts.

"To have my first film accepted into the festival has been a totally amazing experience," says Irizarry, 40, who directed the film together with Veronica Caicedo and also cast himself in a leading role—as a struggling actor.

"Most of the stuff in the movie has really happened to me as an actor trying to make it in New York," adds Irizarry.

"Like the characters, I was fed up and tired of casting directors seeing me for roles like 'Garbage Man No. 1.' But being in this festival has allowed me to start off my directing career with a bang, because it's so well-established."

That wasn't always the case. The first year's festival screened just a handful of movies at a community center in midtown that Chinchilla rented for a couple of nights.

It has since expanded into the largest event of its kind, with movies from both established and emerging filmmakers from across the U.S., Latin America and Spain. They're presented in several Manhattan locations, along with panel discussions, free outdoor screenings of classic movies (like "West Side Story") and themed evenings like Dominican Night—with the backing of corporate sponsors eager to tap into the buying power of the U.S. Latino market.

As the number of submissions from around the world has grown into the hundreds, so has the festival's reputation and prestige.

Director Alfredo De Villa, whose first feature, the low-budget drama "Washington Heights," was a festival darling five years ago, has seen his career grow as a result.

All three of his films have been screened at the fest over the years, and De Villa has gone on to work with several name actors, including Dominic Chianese of "The Sopranos" and Heather Graham, who star in De Villa's drama "Adrift in Manhattan."

"It's definitely like coming home," says De Villa of the festival. "As long as they'll have me, I'll keep bringing them movies."

In recent years, the festival has also become a springboard for bigger-budget projects—"El Cantante," produced by Jennifer Lopez and starring Marc Anthony as troubled salsa singer Hector Lavoe, is premiering at this year's fest before it hits theaters in August.

But according to Chinchilla, the true measure of the festival has been giving locals like Sonia Gonzalez the chance to display their work.

"They've always been very supportive of Latinos, but now it's become a really visible showcase for first-time filmmakers," says Gonzalez, whose documentary on New York

stickball, "Bragging Rights," premieres today.

"To have a feature [at the festival]," she adds, "makes you feel like a celebrity."

[From the New York Daily News, July 11, 2007]

#### CITY'S LATINO FILM FEST IS BACK: BETTER, STRONGER, FEISTIER

(By Lewis Beale)

Talent-driven. That's the word on the eighth annual New York International Latino Film Festival, running for six days from July 24 to July 29 at venues around the city.

"This year is all about growth," says festival Executive Director Calixto Chinchilla. "Filmmakers are doing stronger stories. It's really about new talent; we have a lot of first-time filmmakers, and the stories are amazing."

Chinchilla points, for example, to "The Startup," in which some friends from Queens decide to move to Manhattan and eventually turn their Harlem brownstone into a youth hostel.

Describing the film as "like 'Swingers,'" Chinchilla notes how it shows that local Latino filmmakers "are raising the money, doing it by any means, and doing it well."

And it's not just New Yorkers who are an emerging film force. This year, the festival ([nylatinoofilm.com](http://nylatinoofilm.com)) is showcasing movies from Puerto Rico, which is experiencing a cinematic rebirth.

"Puerto Rico has recently begun to offer tax incentives to anyone who shoots on the island," Chinchilla says, "so you are getting stronger filmmakers who are getting the kind of support they've never had before. Puerto Rico is really committed to its cinema now."

But wait. There's more. Much, much more among the 80 films, including full-length features, shorts and documentaries.

Premieres include "El Cantante," the highly anticipated Jennifer López-Marc Anthony bio of salsa singer Héctor Lavoe; "El Muerto," a film Chinchilla describes as "like 'The Crow,'" a comic book adaptation done well, and "Trade," a film about international sex traffickers and featuring Kevin Kline.

"Trade," says Chinchilla, is "real, raw, sad and was written by [José Rivera], the guy who wrote 'The Motorcycle Diaries.' It's not for everybody, but it's a powerful piece and doesn't pull any punches."

Chinchilla, who also co-founded the festival, is particularly proud of this year's edition because of the way it has expanded to include more than just theatrical presentations.

"This year is more event-driven," he says. "There are more activities. There are outdoor screenings. It's become more than just a sit-down-in-a-theater thing. This was not in the original plan, but we've grown with the community."

So those who want to watch the Sharks and the Jets go at it again can see "West Side Story" at a free outdoor screening at Riverbank State Park on Saturday the 28th.

Panel discussions range from subjects dealing with women in film to how to pitch a film project to top producers and directors.

A free family day sponsored by the Cartoon Network features games and outdoor 'toon screenings. Dominican night will highlight the premiere of "Yuniol," a film from the island nation about two young men from wildly different social classes who interact in interesting ways.

And there are numerous documentaries, shorts, a "Rewind" section with screenings of "Carlito's Way" and "Crossover Dreams," plus feature films from Mexico, Chile, Cuba